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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for establishing behavior modification programs for smokers are discussed. The phases for dealing with this problem behavior are presented as: (1) identification of the specific behavior; (2) recognition of learned behavior and cues that stimulate the behavior; (3) establishment of positive reinforcement to strengthen new behavior, including self control procedures; and (4) methods for supporting and monitoring the new behavior. Key principles for reducing smoking behavior are summarized in the conclusion. (HLM)

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Application of Behavioral Principles to the Control of Smoking Behavior

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Application of Behavioral Principles to the

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Behavior modification is an approach to the modification of life styles originated by behavioral psychologists. Numerous behavioral techniques have been effectively applied to many varying life styles involving habitual practices such as overeating, excessive drinking, and now smoking. Behavioral strategies used to control inappropriate behaviors are based on certain premises founded in psycho-social research. A number of different approaches have been used with behavior modification of smoking, but the principles are usually the same.

Dealing with a Problem Behavior - The First Phase

The first step in problem-solving is to identify the specific behavior or inappropriate life style pattern. With smoking the behavioral approach begins by evaluating the nature of the smoking habit and the frequency of smoking behavior. The responsibility for measuring the behavior is left to the individual. In spite of the fact that the behavior can be measured, there is no guarantee that it will be measured accurately. However, this baseline data provides a basis for comparison of future success in modifying the problem behavior plus yielding information necessary for the design of an individualized approach to smoking control.

Another major element to understand is that social behaviors -- such as smoking -- are learned. These behaviors are learned and maintained through the daily interactions between an individual and any relevant person and/or situation encountered within the environment. The multiplicity

of such encounters ingrains the behavior into a pattern which is often resistent to change. Any behavioral analysis should include a thorough examination of all facets of the smoking pattern.

Once the behavior has been identified, the next step is to determine what is causing the observed behavior, namely, smoking. If some specific environmental condition (situational or social) causes the smoking response, rather than real physiological need being the cause of the response, then that condition can be manipulated or controlled. When the environmental conditions are controlled as adequately as possible the likelihood of smoking is decreased (although not eliminated). After analyzing the smoking pattern the individual should be sensitive to those environmental conditions -- both situational and social -- which dictate, to a certain extent, the smoking response in any given setting. One important key to smoking reduction is to identify strategies or ploys to control or modify the environmental factors which cause smoking. This can be accomplished by removing some of the most obvious smoking cues which trigger a smoking response. This may be as simple as removing ash trays, cigarettes or lighters from easy access. However, it may require tremendous self control such as avoiding certain enjoyable situations, ie. a coffee break.

When the environmental influences triggering smoking have been identified the next step is for the individual to respond in those situations with responses other than smoking. In other words substitute behaviors must be established. Behaviors incompatible with smoking are best, but some behavioral response change is necessary. These behaviors should have the greatest general usefulness to the individual (be as satisfying or nearly as satisfying as smoking would have been) and not involve any personal risk (either physically or psychologically).

Therefore, in review, first the behavior must be identified through the use of baseline measurements. Remember that a social or environmental situation precedes or cues the smoking response. These preceding events must be identified and controlled as an individual begins to alter a specified behavior.

Some Technical Concerns

Also, it is of critical importance that the individual receive positive reinforcement for efforts made toward altering the smoking response. Positive reinforcement should facilitate behavior change. The goals toward which behavior changes are directed should be constructive (better physical capacity, improved taste, etc.) and the rewards given for appropriate behavior should be positive. In this way, new behaviors which are being adopted will become associated with positive consequences (rewards).

Positive reinforcement will strengthen the new, desirable behaviors. As these new behaviors become stronger through repetition, they and the old unwanted behaviors will become less and less compatible until finally, the old behaviors will have been eliminated.

Negative reinforcement, often used in smoking control programs, is associated with punishment. It has the disadvantage of arousing aggression against either the individual responsible for the negative reinforcement (punishment) or any innocent bystander. It also serves to decrease the net total of pleasures for the recipient of the negative reinforcement. For these reasons, negative reinforcement should be minimized in any smoking cessation program. For example, public school policies that refer or demand smokers attend cessation clinics will probably be less than beneficial.

Earlier, reference was made to environmental conditions which may signal smoking responses. The behavioral approach utilizes a set of skills

designed to help the individual cope with and control the environment. These selfcontrol procedures can be developed through assessment of the total situation.

An individual noticing (after collecting baseline data) that he/she smokes in a specific part of the house can assume that an automatic response has been ingrained. The individual may be smoking in response to "desire" which is caused by the specific setting. The same holds true for any activity with which smoking has become associated. For example, watching television, playing cards, talking on the phone or drinking a beer may initiate the smoking response. As a result of this realization the individual may develop a plan where by they smoke in only one specific chair within the house. They arrange to smoke only in that one place and not to engage in any other activity while smoking. This limits the number of secondary reinforces - those pleasures associated with the total situation not just smoking. Many of the secondary reinforcers associated with smoking diminish and hopefully other self-control techniques will become more powerful. For example, the individual may smoke only during specific hours.

The individual should also be sure to get adequate sleep to avoid fatigue. Many people smoke in response to boredom. It is best to avoid boring situations by providing an equally satisfying activity other than smoking. These alternatives should be able to attract an individuals attention and should be available with a minimum of effort. For example, if sewing is an enjoyable activity, the sewing machine should be kept up at all times; interesting books, magazines or records should be readily available; or physical exercise paraphernalia such as gardening tools or running shoes should be convenient. The pleasurable activities will vary from person to person. The important thing to remember is to have some activity that is interesting and equally as satisfying as smoking.

Rather than trying to focus on ridding oneself of "bad" habits, the smoker should try to encourage the formation of new, beneficial habits. Once the new habits are formed, they must be strengthened. Once they are strong, the new habits will be incompatible with the old habits -- so much so that the old habits will gradually fade out. This is a slow process -- the process of change. A good way to stimulate this process is to provide the individual with positive reinforcement for the times when he/she practices good and appropriate habits. These gestures should replace any attacks on the smoker which may have been formerly common among the individual's family and friends. Notice that the emphasis is on the response others give to the individual. When positive outcomes to appropriate behaviors become frequent, the smoker will begin to associate positive, pleasant emotions with his/her appropriate behavior. As the negative feedback diminishes there will be less association with negative, punitive feelings. As was mentioned previously, the positive responses (when they are frequent) do much more to encourage habit change than negative responses. The family and friends of the smoker play a critical role in helping the individual overcome or replace undesirable smoking behavior. Many successful self-helps programs such as alcoholics annonymous and weight watchers all employ such interpersonal components.

Timing is an important consideration. It is not wise to give up smoking shortly before a holiday, when starting a new job, or if there's been a death or serious illness in the family. These are periods of emotional stress and general social change. Routine patterns of behavior are disrupted.

Finally, it is best to continue some means of monitoring to support the maintenance of a change in life style. To do this, the individual

should be encouraged to re-exam the baseline data or else continue to monitor their behavior. Assessment of prior established goals and rewards will also enhance the behavior change process. An individual should continue to monitor these behaviors until the desired behavior is automatic -- a process which can take at least several months, if not years.

Self-control involves self reinforcement, problem solving skills, self-understanding and self-discipline. Changing behavioral patterns and learning self-management skills requires time and effort. The emphasis should be less on counting and restricting cigarettes and more on changing the patterns involved with the total smoking situation. The shift is from the negative "don'ts" to the positive "do's".

Any drastic modification in life style takes time. A very quick smoking reduction usually means that the habit will be regained. It also indicates that long-term deeply ingrained patterns have probably not changed. The patterns which need changing have been the individual's life-long companions. It takes dedication, a concerted effort and the development of effective self-control skills.

Some Key Principles

In summary, anyone attempting to reduce their level of smoking behavior may be wise to examine the following self-control guidelines:

- Identify those smoking cues within your own environment that "trigger" the thought of smoking.
- Realize that smoking cues exist in many places, many times during the day, and for many reasons such as time of day, availability of smoking materials, sight of cigarettes or emotional state.

- Understand that often the relationship between smoking cues and smoking habits may be such that the individual is unconsciously cued to smoke as a result of the surroundings or emotional situation involved.
- Recognize that the individual must become aware of certain smoking cues before attempting to remove them.
- Identify skills that can reduce smoking cues specific to an individuals particular situation, for example:
  - spend less time in smoking situations;
  - re-schedule daily activities;
  - avoid certain environmental influences;
  - spend less time along;
  - never carry cigarettes on your person
- Identify those life styles which may interfere or be incompatible with smoking.